

Our Night Sky for February 5th, 2024

For some time, I have been suggesting you find Jupiter or sometimes Saturn. Not much variety, sometimes the giant outer planets may be in our night sky but you will need a telescope to see more than just a dim point of light. Mars has been on the other side of the sun and don't forget, almost half of the nights can be washed out by a bright moon. Well let's try and find something just a little bit more difficult. You already know where to find the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper. And I have previously pointed you to some of the circumpolar constellations like Cassiopeia.

Let's turn due south and look at the very easy to find constellation of Orion sitting at about 30 degrees above the horizon. Follow the three belt stars by extending a line down and left about four times the length of the belt stars. You will come to a quite bright star in the constellation of Canis Major. The star is called Sirius (the dog star). Sirius is one of our closest neighbors at 8.6 Lys. Sirius is actually a binary, two separate stars separated by an orbit about the size of our solar system.

You may not know that many of the early voyages to explore Polynesia, New Zealand and other Pacific islands were astronomical expeditions attempting to investigate nearby stars primarily using trigonometry to measure distances in Our Night Sky.